United Nations A/57/488

General Assembly

Distr.: General
21 October 2002

Original: English

Fifty-seventh session
Agenda items 111 and 122

Review of the efficiency of the administrative and financial functioning of the United Nations

Report of the Secretary-General on the activities of the Office of Internal Oversight Services

Management review of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

Note by the Secretary-General*

1. Pursuant to General Assembly resolutions 48/218 B of 29 July 1994, 54/244 of 23 December 1999 and 56/253 (para. 128) of 24 December 2001, the Secretary-General has the honour to transmit, for the attention of the Assembly, the attached report, conveyed to him by the Under-Secretary-General for Internal Oversight Services, on the management review of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR).

2. The Secretary-General takes note of its findings and concurs with its recommendations.

* Because of the relatively short time since the adoption of General Assembly resolution 56/253, OIOS was able to complete the review only in August 2002. The report transmitted by the present note was delayed accordingly.

02-65348 (E) 061102

Management review of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

Summary

Since its establishment, the mandates and operational activities of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) have grown rapidly. At the same time, its regular budget has decreased while extrabudgetary funding has grown. Consequently, almost half of its core functions are now supported by voluntary contributions. Many of the posts responsible for core functions are encumbered by project personnel.

The last five years witnessed significant accomplishments in the promotion and protection of human rights. However, three problems need to be addressed to allow the Office to fulfil its mandate more effectively. First, there has been steady expansion of its activities driven largely by an extemporaneous accumulation of new mandates, reaction to emergencies and decisions responding to various requests. The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights needs to develop a strategy that could guide priority choices in substantive activities, servicing functions, technical cooperation and field presence. Second, the organizational structure of OHCHR has evolved largely in an ad hoc manner and has become unwieldy. It needs to be streamlined and made more functional, with clear and effective reporting lines. Third, the management of the Office has to become more consistent and coherent.

The strong aspect of the Office management culture is its commitment to seeking improvements through internal examinations and external evaluations, which have resulted in numerous recommendations. However, many of these remain outstanding. The persistent weakness is inadequate follow-up on lessons learned. Remedying this fault would greatly improve the effectiveness of the Office.

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I. Introduction

1. The Office of Internal Oversight Services of the United Nations Secretariat (OIOS) conducted the present comprehensive management review of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) in accordance with paragraph 128 of General Assembly resolution 56/253. OIOS distributed questionnaires to 216 Professional staff members of OHCHR to which 54 replies were received, and interviewed OHCHR staff and management in Geneva and in the field as well as representatives of Member States and non-governmental organizations. In addition, OIOS took into account the results of numerous recent audits, oversight reviews and evaluation studies.

2. OHCHR was established by General Assembly resolution 48/141 of 20 December 1993 which mandated the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to promote and protect the enjoyment and full realization by all people of all rights established in the Charter of the United Nations and in the international human rights instruments. The mandate includes preventing human rights violations, securing respect for all human rights, enhancing international cooperation in this field, coordinating relevant activities throughout the United Nations and strengthening and streamlining the United Nations machinery in the field of human rights with a view to improving its efficiency and effectiveness. The Secretary-General's reform programme of 1997 designated the issue of human rights as cutting across each of the four substantive fields of the Secretariat's work programme (peace and security, economic and social affairs, development cooperation, and humanitarian affairs) and restructured and consolidated the human rights programme. In recognition of the pivotal importance of the mandate of OHCHR, the High Commissioner became a member of all four Executive Committees established by the Secretary-General.

II. Resources and workload

3. The promotion of human rights was given priority in the medium-term plans for the periods 1998-2001 and 2002-2005. Human rights were identified in the United Nations Millennium Declaration (see General Assembly resolution 55/2) as one of the key objectives to which special significance was assigned. However, the priority status accorded the human rights programme was not reflected in the United Nations regular budget resource base. During the last six years, the regular budget appropriations for human rights decreased by 19 per cent — from $48 million in 1996-1997 to $39 million in 2000-2001 and the share of OHCHR in the United Nations regular budget went down from 1.84 to 1.54 per cent. During the same time, its extrabudgetary resources more than doubled — from $36 million to $79 million — and their share in the overall OHCHR budget rose from 43 to 67 per cent.

4. In reviewing the purposes of voluntary contributions to OHCHR, OIOS was satisfied that provisions of Regulation 7.2 and Rule 107.6 of the Financial Regulations and Rules of the United Nations were observed, namely, that such purposes were consistent with the mandate, policies and activities of OHCHR. The main concern of OIOS is that the mandated core activities of the Office be largely supported by voluntary contributions rather than by the regular budget. Out of 155 core Professional posts, only 88 (or 57 per cent) are financed from the regular

budget. The incumbents of the rest are mostly employed as project (200 series) personnel. A debilitating disruption in the OHCHR core activities could occur if voluntary contributions diminished or were increasingly earmarked.

5. OIOS recognizes that the disparity between the regular budget and extrabudgetary financing does not yield an easy short-term resolution. Nevertheless, it is important for intergovernmental bodies to be fully aware of all the implications of this anomalous situation.

6. The fact that new responsibilities were commonly assigned to OHCHR without commensurate additional regular budget resources resulted in the need to fill the gap through voluntary contributions. The General Assembly was not consistently apprised of programme budget implications when it approved additional mandates and activities for OHCHR.

7. The workload of OHCHR comprises a broad range of secretariat, technical and analytical support and servicing to the multiple and complex institutional tiers of the United Nations human rights machinery: the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council, the Commission on Human Rights and its Subcommission on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights, the treaty monitoring bodies and a number of extra-conventional procedures and mechanisms (working groups, special rapporteurs, special representatives and independent experts). As this machinery evolved, so grew the OHCHR workload. OHCHR also considerably expanded its field presence and its technical cooperation activities.

8. Since 1997, while the OHCHR regular budget was shrinking, the number of working groups increased from 13 to 16, and the number of special rapporteurs, special representatives and independent experts tripled from 11 to 34, while both the volume of meetings serviced by OHCHR, and the amount of documentation produced biennially for different organs, more than doubled.

9. Of 946 parliamentary documents of all kinds produced during 2000-2001, 12 per cent were for the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council, 27 per cent went to the Commission on Human Rights and its Subcommission, and 61 per cent were for the treaty bodies and special procedures. OIOS observed considerable inefficiencies in this flow of outputs. Numerous documents are submitted in the name of the Secretary-General, the High Commissioner, special rapporteurs and independent experts or as notes by the Secretariat to the different organs on the same subject. Out of 183 official documents reviewed by OIOS, some 70 (or 38 per cent) could be considered thematically overlapping or duplicative. A telling case of such overlap arises when Special Rapporteurs are called upon to report to the Commission and then to the Assembly within a short time period of only two to three months, with the content of the reports being very similar. Costs incurred through such double reporting could be avoided if the original report to the Commission was presented to the Assembly with an oral update by a special rapporteur. It would be desirable to formalize such procedural change through an Assembly resolution. OIOS noted that the High Commissioner is cognizant of the problem and has taken the initiative towards eventually consolidating certain types of reporting through a resolution of the relevant policy-making body.

10. Also, half a dozen treaty bodies are currently considering multiple reports from countries under relevant treaty obligations. The number of reports of States parties and related analyses and observations by OHCHR thereon exceed the capacity of

treaty bodies to consider them in a timely manner, resulting in a backlog of submissions pending consideration. Many developing countries experience considerable difficulty in coping with the burden of separate reporting to each treaty body. OIOS is aware that this matter is being actively discussed by Member States with a view to streamlining all such reporting requirements. OIOS is cognizant that achieving such rationalization and consolidation would require considerable time and effort.

11. Overall, OIOS observed that the disparity between resources and workload presents a growing challenge in many organizational entities of OHCHR. One example is the situation in the Petitions Team which processes individual complaints under the relevant mandates of treaty bodies. The petition system is the basic means through which the peoples of the world may complain about human rights violations and discrimination on any grounds. It is one of the more important core functions of OHCHR. In addition to servicing 19 weeks of the meetings of expert committees and their working groups, the Team reviews cases for consideration and prepares draft decisions of these bodies on admissibility and merits. The strength of the Team remains at eight Professional staff members, of which only two are regular staff and six are project personnel. Its per capita workload in terms of incoming petitions increased by two thirds between 1997 and 2001 and keeps on growing. This mismatch between demand for the Team's services and its capacity makes a responsible fulfilment of one of the most important OHCHR mandates close to impossible.

12. In reviewing OHCHR use of resources, OIOS was satisfied that mechanisms for programmatic, administrative and financial oversight are in place. Their effectiveness, however, is uneven. OHCHR productivity could be improved through rationalizing its working methods, streamlining its organizational structure and enhancing management practices. There is an overarching problem in respect of achieving these goals. OIOS observed that, while the management of OHCHR is clearly aware of the need for improvement, translating this awareness into action remains inadequate.

III. Quest for improvement

13. A critical requirement for effective management is the ability to learn from experience and to seek improvements in work methods. The leadership of OHCHR should be given credit for its commitment to these goals. Numerous internal and external evaluations were carried out, senior management retreats and field presences meetings were conducted, and the management-of-change process was launched. These exercises produced a considerable body of proposals and recommendations, most of which OIOS found very useful. However, executive follow-up on these recommendations was insufficient and uneven throughout OHCHR.

14. The common pattern that emerged was one in which a review or evaluation was launched with vigour, was conducted with commitment and produced pertinent recommendations. Then, only ad hoc follow-up arrangements were made and such follow-ups were neither continuous nor consistent. New priorities claim management's attention, and while some recommendations are implemented, the majority remain pending and gradually drift out of sight. Subsequent reviews often

result in the same or similar recommendations on persistent problems and these, in turn, suffer the same fate. By OIOS count, there are currently over 100 outstanding recommendations resulting from different exercises pertaining to all areas of OHCHR management. While there is no lack of good faith to bring about improvement on the part of management, there is a weakness in maintaining the institutional memory of the outcome of such efforts and following through with implementation. Such follow-up should be strengthened and systematized.

IV. Issues of substance

15. The last five years saw a considerable expansion in the substantive activities of OHCHR, its support to extra-conventional procedures and treaty bodies and its technical cooperation and field presences. Mainstreaming of human rights into the United Nations system-wide efforts for development and maintenance of international peace and security was advanced. Greater visibility for human rights on the global political scene was achieved, the emphasis on economic, social and cultural rights became more pronounced, and the issue of human rights was integrated into conflict prevention, peacekeeping and peace-building. The Office became increasingly operational in its mission of promoting and protecting human rights. This multidimensional expansion brought to the fore the cardinal problem of a holistic implementation of the "universal, indivisible, interdependent and interrelated" doctrine of human rights.

A. Strategy

16. The High Commissioner sought to promote all of human rights with equal vigour. Progress has been made with respect to establishing longer-term objectives, planning and better in-house coordination. OIOS observed, however, that reactive, emergency-driven and poorly coordinated engagements often weaken the programmatic focus and that support to thematic and geographical aspects of various mandates and procedures is not always coherent. Programmatic and operational objectives are often set without a realistic appraisal of the expertise and resources needed to achieve them.

17. OIOS observed that the weakness in strategic direction results in the lack of an optimal balance between resources dedicated to advancing mainstreaming and to the Office's own technical cooperation; and between regional activities, regional representation, country activities and field presence. Efforts to address these challenges are not coherent. The regional dimension of OHCHR activities is a case in point. OIOS found weaknesses and voids in programmatic and operational coordination among regional advisers, regional representatives and country presence in relevant regions. Terms of reference and reporting lines for regional representatives need to be clarified and connected to regional strategies. OIOS had difficulty in identifying the strategic considerations that determine the choice of technical cooperation projects.

18. OHCHR needs an integrated, multidimensional strategy that would direct the priority-setting in its diverse activities, including the mainstreaming of human rights. This strategy should guide all organizational units in determining their

medium- and longer-term goals and prioritize their operational activities and technical cooperation.

B. Methodology

19. OHCHR has become more proactive in promoting, protecting and mainstreaming human rights, and also more operational. This requires prioritizing the work of the Office and determining its comparative advantage vis-à-vis other actors in various areas of human rights. The Policy Planning and Methodology Team was effectively created in November 2001 to develop necessary policies and methodologies, guidelines and manuals on standard operating procedures and various training tools. Its tasks also included establishing a functional system of evaluation in OHCHR.

20. While OIOS found this concept important and timely, its implementation has left much to be desired. The Team was divided between the Activities and Programmes Branch and the Research and Right to Development Branch with respect to enhancing horizontal cooperation within the Office. However, OIOS found little evidence of such impact. While the Team produced a number of valuable outputs, it was often used as a back-up resource for various emergency missions outside of its planned tasks, thus diverting it from its core assignments. The five Professional staff initially assigned to the Team were supposed to be strengthened by five additional staff; this strengthening, however, had not occurred at the time of the OIOS review. OIOS observed that, under these conditions, the volume of planned outputs far exceeded the Team's capacity, resulting in delays in the implementation of some important tasks and depriving end-users of some of the expected tools.

21. OIOS considers the concept of an entity assigned to support policy formulation and methodology development essential for the success of the work of OHCHR. To turn it into reality, however, requires organizational soundness, critical mass of diverse expertise, effective dissemination of its products and factoring end-users' feedback into the work of the unit.

C. Planning and implementation

22. OHCHR aims to ensure the integration of universally recognized human rights norms both in law and in practice, to provide the highest-quality support to the international human rights bodies and to act as a catalyst in integrating the human rights standards throughout the work of the United Nations. The decisions of policy-making organs guide this effort and emphasis is placed on the enhancement of cooperation at the international, regional and national levels.

23. The scope of activities in pursuing the mission of OHCHR comprises research, development of norms, support to treaty bodies and special procedures, preventive and curative protection, promotion of human rights and dissemination of relevant information, advisory services and fostering of national human rights strategies, institutions and systems. OIOS observed that the planning of these activities is of a rather general nature and it is often not closely aligned with the resources available. The objectives, expected accomplishments and the listing of outputs in the biennial programme budget are not coherently translated into the work plans of the

organizational units with clear assignments of deadlines and responsibilities. At the planning stage, there is no consistent effort to establish substantive linkages between outputs of similar or closely related subject matter. The planning discipline with regard to activities financed from extrabudgetary contributions is particularly in need of further improvement.

24. While OIOS recognizes that unforeseen circumstances do not yield easily to the rigour of planning, the work of the Office would certainly benefit from actionable plans with regard to preventive action, emergency response mechanisms, urgent action procedures and follow-up on recommendations of treaty bodies and mandate-holders of special procedures. Durable links should be established at the outset between complementary activities, such as country analyses prepared in the context of the State reporting process, fact-finding and fact-gathering, and technical cooperation. This holistic planning approach should be vertically consistent — from the Office level to an organizational unit and finally down to a staff member's work plan.

25. OIOS noted that the Secretary-General's bulletin on the organization of OHCHR (ST/SGB/1997/10) had provided for a staff support function to develop and maintain a framework for management and planning of the activities of the human rights programme and facilitate the development of the overall work programme, and to prepare annual management reports on activities and achievements (para. 5.2 (f)). This function was realized only partially and remains understaffed and undergraded.

26. OIOS noted that the OHCHR biennial reporting of programme performance was timely and of good quality. That contrasted, however, with the uneven monitoring of implementation during the biennium. Reviews of progress in implementing outputs against deadlines are mostly ad hoc. There is no central control over follow-up to resolutions and decisions of human rights organs and no system to alert senior management to instances where required implementation action is lagging. Efforts to develop appropriate mechanisms to capture performance information and to guide the collection, collation and presentation of such information are in their infancy. The self-evaluation efforts are not systematic and coherent.

V. Organization and structure

27. The organization and structure of OHCHR were initially based on regular budget activities and resources. The rapid expansion of extrabudgetary resources has led to its mutation. Currently, the structure of the Office is opaque and cumbersome, with convoluted reporting lines.

28. With their misleading names, the three Branches — the Activities and Programmes Branch, the Research and Right to Development Branch and the Support Services Branch — are rendered unwieldy through the ad hoc creation of teams and units in response to new programmatic mandates and operational concerns. Their strength ranges from about 50 to over 100 Professional staff — well above the conventional strength of divisions within the United Nations Secretariat. There is a clear need to streamline the OHCHR organizational structure to form more coherent and manageable substantive divisions and OHCHR-wide programme support services.

29. OIOS noted that the nomenclature of organizational entities and the level of management posts were drastically different from those of comparable entities of the United Nations Secretariat. OHCHR currently consists of branches and teams as main organizational components, with a few units. It would be appropriate if, in accordance with the current Secretariat-wide practice, entities of from four to eight Professional posts were named either units or sections and headed by a chief at the P-4 or P-5 level; those with the strength of from 8 to 15 Professional posts were named branches or services and headed by an officer at the D-1 level; and the entities with the strength of between 15 and 20 Professional posts were named divisions and headed by an officer at the D-2 level. OIOS has no doubt that such normalization of nomenclature and structure would benefit the organization of the Office and the morale of the management and staff. OIOS is cognizant that the reclassification of posts in line with their real responsibilities would have resource implications. However, OIOS believes that such a rationalization is essential for the efficiency and effectiveness of OHCHR.

30. Regarding the substantive aspects of streamlining the organizational structure, OIOS believes that the departure point should be creating a critical mass for effective OHCHR-wide management and programme support in separate entities while concentrating the programme delivery in substantive divisions. Currently, such essential OHCHR-wide support functions as information management, policy, methodological and mainstreaming support, legal advice, security, registry and document processing, external relations and fund-raising are dispersed throughout the Branches. OIOS is of the view that, organizationally, separating these OHCHR-wide programme support functions from substantive ones and subordinating them to the Deputy High Commissioner, would enhance their effectiveness. Most of them could be shaped either into a single programme support division or, preferably, into separate thematic branches or sections. Others could be absorbed into an administration division.

31. Another important functional point underlying the structural choices is the role of country Desk Officers (DO). Currently, there are 27 of them covering 188 Member States, giving an average of 7 countries per Desk Officer. In addition, staff members supporting five treaty bodies become engaged, as required, in relevant issues pertaining to different countries with the Desk Officer playing only a marginal role in the process. Once all treaty bodies examine country reporting, country-specific information is often institutionally lost. OIOS believes that expanding the functions of the Desk Officers to serving the treaty bodies in regard to the countries under their responsibility may help consolidate the reporting process and improve the coordination of recommendations between treaty bodies; strengthen the institutional approach of OHCHR to country human rights situations; and maximize the use of the limited personnel resources of OHCHR. With this option, the number of Desk Officers would need to be increased through a carefully planned possible reassignment of some staff from treaty body support responsibilities. The relevant organizational entity — an operations division — could provide country coverage and support to field presences, technical cooperation and regional activities. The activities related to national institutions, which are currently self-standing, should be incorporated into this division and become an integral part of technical cooperation and advisory services.

32. Consequently, the staff providing general support to the work of treaty bodies would focus on work that was not country-specific by following up on the

recommendations of treaty bodies and developing tools to facilitate their implementation. OIOS believes that the currently existing organizational division between entities dedicated to civil and political rights and those dedicated to economic, social and cultural rights should be eliminated and that they should be grouped into a treaty support division. The human rights education activity could be absorbed into this division. The follow-up to the recommendations of treaty bodies should be strengthened.

33. OIOS observed that there is an urgent need for strengthening the interdisciplinary legal and socio-economic research and policy analysis capability of OHCHR. It is obvious in the area of "right to development" where OHCHR relies on consultants and expert groups to conduct analyses of the different aspects of the problem and most of the time and effort of the Professional staff is devoted to supporting various expert groups. There is also a need for periodic analysis of the jurisprudence of the treaty bodies and for synthesizing observations and issues emanating from reviews of the reports of the States parties. A series of relevant periodic publications could provide a valuable basis for the technical cooperation activities and useful references for both legal and policy analysis of human rights issues. A research and policy analysis division could be established to carry out such responsibilities along with assisting the High Commissioner in developing strategies for both urgent action and a long-term framework for human rights mainstreaming strategy and policies.

34. OIOS sees merit in combining all the entities involved in servicing special procedures along with the Petitions Team into a separate special procedures and petitions division.

35. An option that deserves to be considered is constituting secretariat services to the Commission on Human Rights, its Subcommission and the entity responsible for supporting human rights trust funds as two self-standing sections reporting to the Deputy High Commissioner. The support to the Commission and Subcommission should put more emphasis on following up on priority issues. Similarly, a unit responsible for public information activities, essential for the human rights mission, should be created.

36. OIOS recalls that previous management reviews recommended establishing a central responsibility centre to supervise all the programme support functions of OHCHR, including the administrative and financial support, to prevent the diffusion of administrative and financial responsibilities and to ensure the coherence of such support. OIOS found this recommendation still pertinent. Implementing it would strengthen the executive capacity for establishing good management practices, sensitizing all programme managers to their responsibility for efficient management of their programmes and resources and their personal accountability in this regard and ensuring coherent and effective programme support. Such responsibility could be entrusted either to the Deputy High Commissioner or, if the High Commissioner chooses to delegate a considerable portion of substantive responsibilities to the Deputy, to an office manager at a senior director level.

VI. Executive management

37. OIOS noted the widely acknowledged success of the former High Commissioner in enhancing the global profile of OHCHR, inspiring the commitment

of staff to its mission and mobilizing the support of the international community for the human rights cause. Her leadership had enhanced the moral authority of the Office and ensured that the bearers of the human rights message were vocal and convincing.

38. OIOS is of the view that these accomplishments need to be supported by an equally effective build-up in executive management. OHCHR needs to develop solid modalities and practices in programme planning, monitoring of progress against adopted plans and assessing how its resources are being deployed and utilized to achieve priorities. The complementarities and synergies between various OHCHR activities have to be identified and realized. There is a need to strengthen the executive capacity for establishing and maintaining good management practices; overseeing the consistent implementation of executive decisions; and sensitizing all programme managers to their responsibility for efficient management of their activities and resources as well as personal accountability in this regard.

39. While key management advisory mechanisms such as the Senior Policy Committee (SPC), the Management Board (MB) and the Project Review Committee are in place, it is important to establish a clear distinction between the roles of the Senior Policy Committee and the Management Board, prioritize their agenda and ensure thorough follow-up on executive decisions of these bodies.

40. The immediate support to the High Commissioner is provided by the front Office. Currently, its functions and procedures are not formally developed and the roles of the Head of the Office, the Special Assistant to the High Commissioner and the Special Advisers are not clearly defined. The Office should be focused on staff support and coordination functions. Special Advisers should provide expert advice and not substitute for line managers. There should be a system through which all senior managers may be fully informed about all pertinent issues.

41. In considering the efficiency of executive management, OIOS observed that such an important resource as the post of the Deputy High Commissioner could be more fully utilized. Clearly defining the responsibilities of the Deputy and consistently observing such empowering arrangements could considerably improve the current situation. Assigning to the Deputy a fair share of the executive management burden should allow the High Commissioner to focus fully on leadership and the global promotion of the mission of OHCHR.

VII. Information management

42. Gathering, processing, analysing, organizing and disseminating information are at the heart of human rights work. Recognition that efficient information management is essential for effective human rights promotion and protection was reflected in measures to enhance the OHCHR capacity in this area. These endeavours are hampered, however, by a shortage of resources and fragmentation of efforts.

43. OIOS observed that the share of regular budget and staff resources dedicated to information technology and management (ITM) activities is exceptionally low in OHCHR — less than 3 per cent compared with over 9 per cent for most Geneva-based United Nations entities. In regard to extrabudgetary funds, information technology and management is also given insufficient attention. There is a historical

reason for this — for a long time, the main application of information technology and management in OHCHR was text processing and it was financed accordingly.

44. However, today's technology allows access to human rights information by experts and all the citizens of the world through the Internet. Human rights information is multifaceted and intrinsically interrelated. Establishing thematic, geographical and judicial linkages in the information environment is therefore essential. There is a clear need for more sophisticated and versatile information technology and management services in OHCHR and a concomitant higher level of resources.

45. The efforts to satisfy this growing demand are not, however, based on realistic assessment and allocation of resources available. Currently, not enough attention is given to coordination of efforts and quality of outputs. For example, OIOS observed that there are about 25 databases run by different OHCHR entities. To maintain all of them is an impossible task for the current information technology and management resources of OHCHR. Another weakness observed by OIOS was the unevenness of discipline in updating the substantive content of many of these databases as well as insufficient user knowledge about them.

46. OIOS was impressed with the dedication, professionalism and vision of the information technology and management staff of the Office. OIOS believes that this entity should be strengthened, both resource-wise and organizationally, and empowered to realize its full potential. Such a revitalized organizational entity should concentrate on information technology and management policy, and structural and development issues and provide OHCHR-wide guidance. The roles of content providers and content managers also should be clarified.

47. Creating a comprehensive OHCHR-wide information technology and management system could resolve many of the persistent internal coordination problems. More versatile, interlinked and sophisticated information databases and networks could provide an effective solution to most intra-OHCHR coordination challenges and save considerable staff time now spent on coordination efforts.

VIII. Human resources management

48. The growth in voluntary financing has left a heavy imprint on human resources management at OHCHR. Currently, voluntary contributions finance 84 out of 185 Professional staff (or 45 per cent) in Geneva and 92 out of 99 Professional staff (or 93 per cent) in the field. Most of the extrabudgetary staff are managed by the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) and encumber "L" category posts (technical assistance project personnel under the 200 series of staff rules). They account for 47 per cent of staff performing the core functions of the Office. It should be recalled that the "L" category posts are not subject to the stringency of the United Nations regulations and rules with regard to recruitment and promotion. OIOS noted that assigning personnel contracted by UNOPS to core functions creates complicated and controversial personnel management issues regarding reporting lines of such staff and assessment of their performance. There is a perception among the staff that placement and promotion under this category are at times arbitrary.

49. OIOS was concerned about widespread assignment of technical advisers (200 series staff) to carry out line functions, which should be performed by 100 series

staff, and to supervise staff under the 100 series of staff rules. This practice is against established policies and should be discontinued. OIOS realizes that achieving the regularization of the "L/200" staff is not a simple exercise because of the prevalence of such personnel among the OHCHR staff and the legacy of disregarding the clear distinction between personnel management under the 100 series of the Staff Rules and that under the 200 series. While recognizing the challenge, OIOS is of the view that this problem should be tackled without delay, as it will only be exacerbated with time. To regularize the situation, management should clearly establish which posts are under the 100 series and which are under the 200 series within the framework of the approved new organizational structure, conduct a classification exercise and issue vacancy announcements in accordance with established rules and procedures. The experience of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) in recently conducting a similar exercise should be helpful.

50. The prevalence of project personnel has impacted on the geographical distribution of the OHCHR staff. It is skewed towards Western Europe and North America as compared with the Secretariat-wide pattern. The geographical distribution of OHCHR consultants is similarly biased. OIOS noted that the Commission on Human Rights recorded its concern in this regard. OIOS is of the view that the management of OHCHR should pay closer attention to this problem.

51. OIOS noted that while the Performance Appraisal System (PAS) exercise has become part and parcel of the overall performance assessment in OHCHR, its application was uneven. A more consistent approach should be exercised in regard to its procedures and deadlines.

52. In general, OIOS felt that the middle-level managerial culture could benefit from more consistency and professionalism. It is not unusual for managers at different levels to have a substantive professional expertise but their management skills are lagging behind. The top leadership would be well advised to infuse a healthy dose of managerial discipline at all levels, to conduct management training as required and to keep managers accountable for discharging their responsibilities. OHCHR managers need to give staff a clear sense of purpose and direction, to motivate them and to build team spirit.

IX. Administrative and financial management

53. OIOS observed that the capacity of the Administrative Service was strengthened recently and its expertise enhanced. It is making determined efforts to improve the effectiveness of administrative support and the accuracy and promptness of financial reporting. Tighter financial and administrative controls have been introduced. Fund-raising has become more proactive and consistent. Improvements in the contributions database and clean-up of old records resulted in better monitoring of extrabudgetary resources and more reliable flow of financial information to responsible staff and donors. Financial reporting from implementing partners, in particular UNOPS, is becoming more reliable, consolidated and timely. The personnel management capacity of the Service has also been strengthened recently.

54. However, much remains to be done to make administrative and finance areas fully effective. Many specific recommendations in this regard were made in recent years in a number of audits conducted by OIOS and the Board of Auditors. Their implementation is under way but progress could be more rapid and consistent. OIOS

recognizes that, to achieve further improvements, the capacity of the administration needs to be further enhanced in terms of both its numerical strength and its expertise, with special emphasis on its support to the field presences.

55. One of the main difficulties that became obvious in the course of this review concerned the relationship of OHCHR with the administrations of both UNOPS and the United Nations Office at Geneva. In regard to the former, OIOS believes that a comprehensive review of the scope and the nature of services provided by UNOPS should be conducted with particular regard to the above recommendation on regularizing the personnel structure of OHCHR. Concerning the United Nations Office at Geneva, OIOS observed the need for improving communication between the United Nations Office at Geneva and OHCHR and aiming at concluding the service-level agreements that would record common understanding on quality and timeliness of expected administrative support. OHCHR might find useful the experience of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat in cooperating with the United Nations Office at Geneva and UNOPS.

56. In the course of this review, the issue of enhancing the delegation of authority to OHCHR in administrative and financial matters was repeatedly raised. While OIOS supports decentralization in principle, the administrative capacity of OHCHR needs to be strengthened first. The matter should be kept under review and be considered when there is enough evidence to justify such action.

57. Given the considerable number of outstanding specific recommendations of previous bodies, it would be redundant to repeat them in the present report. Implementing them in a timely and effective manner should result in further tangible improvements.

X. Conclusions

58. The recent growth in mandates and extrabudgetary resources calls for a realistic assessment of the ways and means of carrying out the mission of OHCHR effectively and for making informed choices as to the necessary improvements in its management, structure and work methods. The last five years witnessed significant accomplishments. It is time now to reflect on the problems that persist and to prepare for new challenges.

59. In doing so, the High Commissioner should give priority to formulating a comprehensive strategy for the Office that guides allocation of resources to its diverse activities including the regional dimension and field presence. The structure of the Office should be aligned with the strategy and ensure that workflows and reporting lines are clear and consistent. Such a revitalization exercise should take full advantage of the ideas and proposals that were put forth by the committed, enthusiastic and hard-working staff of OHCHR.

XI. Recommendations

60. The Secretary-General should fully apprise the General Assembly of how the persistent shortfall in the regular budget funding impacts on the mandated activities of the Office (paras. 3-5) (SP-02-001-01).*

61. In accordance with rule 153 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly, comprehensive statements of programme budget implications should be submitted to the Assembly in all instances where new OHCHR mandates and activities are presented for approval (para. 6) (SP-02-001-02).

62. The High Commissioner should pursue further the consolidation of reporting to different organs on similar or closely related topics, with oral updates on recently issued reports, as necessary, and propose enabling actions for such arrangements to the General Assembly (paras. 7-9) (SP-02-001-03).

63. The High Commissioner should consistently pursue consultations with the treaty bodies on the modalities for consolidating reporting under various treaty obligations into a single national report with a view to achieving a steady progress towards this goal (para. 10) (SP-02-001-04).

64. The staffing of the Petitions Team should be brought in line with its workload to ensure the timely processing of communications and relevant jurisprudence (para. 11) (SP-02-001-05).

65. Management should review, prioritize and systematize all outstanding recommendations. Responsibilities and deadlines for action should be assigned and a mechanism for ensuring their implementation established (paras. 13-14) (SP-02-001-06).

66. The High Commissioner should draw up a comprehensive and detailed strategy for the Office, from which the medium- and longer-term tangible objectives of the OHCHR organizational units and operational activities would be derived. The strategy should be realistic, taking into account the resources available (paras. 16-18) (SP-02-001-07).

67. The entity responsible for policy planning and methodology should be established as a self-contained unit having OHCHR-wide responsibility and reporting to the Deputy High Commissioner. It should be strengthened with due regard to the required diversity of professional expertise. Realistic work plans for the short, medium and longer term should be adopted, with clear assignment of responsibilities, deadlines and accountability for the delivery of planned outputs (paras. 19-21) (SP-02-001-08).

68. (a) There should be an established practice of preparing annual work plans for each organizational unit that would include all outputs, deadlines, staff responsibilities and resources required. Plans should be coordinated to establish substantive horizontal linkages, approved by the High Commissioner and updated as necessary.

(b) Staff support to programme management and planning should be strengthened and upgraded to ensure that the framework for programme

* The symbols in parentheses in the present section refer to an internal code used by the Office of Internal Oversight Services for recording recommendations.

management and work planning is fully developed and incorporates extrabudgetary activities and that required guidance, training and support are provided to managers at all levels (paras. 22-25) (SP-02-001-09).

69. Central staff support to the ongoing monitoring of the implementation of the work programme should be strengthened and made responsible for the preparation of quarterly progress reports for senior management along with short-term projections regarding priorities to be focused on in regard to achieving the set objectives of the Office. This responsibility centre should also monitor the implementation of recommendations of intergovernmental and oversight bodies, follow up on executive decisions and foster the development of self-evaluation activities (para. 26) (SP-02-001-10).

70. The High Commissioner should align the nomenclature of OHCHR organizational entities with common norms, initiate the reclassification of all managerial posts in line with their actual responsibilities, and subsequently apprise the Commission on Human Rights and the General Assembly of the relevant financial implications (paras. 27-29) (SP-02-001-11).

71. The organizational structure of OHCHR should be streamlined into more manageable, compact and substantively coherent entities benefiting from the synergies between the activities they carry out. In deciding on the organizational streamlining, the High Commissioner may wish to take into consideration the proposals outlined in paragraphs 30-36 (SP-02-001-12).

72. The High Commissioner should define the responsibilities delegated to the Deputy and maintain the integrity of such delegation and accountability for discharging those responsibilities. Clear procedures and reporting lines should be established in the front office (paras. 40-41) (SP-02-001-13).

73. An information management and communication section reporting directly to the Deputy High Commissioner should be established. It should comprise the library, web site, database and information technology operations throughout OHCHR. It should be mandated to establish and oversee the relevant policies and procedures and to vet all information technology projects proposed by other entities. A biennial plan for information management and technology development should be prepared and implemented (paras. 42-47) (SP-02-001-14).

74. Systematic action should be taken to reclassify all posts in the new organizational structure according to their levels and types of service and to decide whether they belong to the 100 or the 200 series. Evaluation criteria should be put in place to define qualifications, expertise and performance for the purpose of considering serving staff against the new staffing table. OHCHR should seek assistance from the Office of Human Resources Management of the United Nations Secretariat in carrying out this regularization exercise (paras. 48-49) (SP-02-001-15).

75. The High Commissioner should devote more attention to human resources management issues, including the geographical distribution of the staff, PAS discipline and effectiveness, and managerial accountability for discharging supervisory duties. The situation should be periodically reviewed at senior staff meetings and appropriate remedial measures taken (paras. 50-52) (SP-02-001-16).

76. A comprehensive plan of action to implement all outstanding recommendations of internal and external reviews and evaluations as well as

oversight bodies should be drawn up in the context of implementing the recommendations of the current report. The implementing action should be monitored quarterly by the senior management (paras. 53-57) (SP-02-001-17).

77. *In his comments on the present report, the High Commissioner concurred with the above OIOS recommendations. He stressed that the need for additional regular budget resources to carry out mandated core functions of OHCHR is acutely felt. The process of sharpening OHCHR programmatic priorities has been launched and will remain ongoing. The nomenclature and structure of the Office will be guided by the OIOS recommendations and brought in line with the nomenclature and structure of the rest of the Secretariat over a period of time.*

78. *The High Commissioner recalled that the Secretary-General in his report entitled "Strengthening of the United Nations: an agenda for further change" (A/57/387), of 9 September 2002, had requested (para. 58, action 5) that the High Commissioner report to him by March 2003 on a plan to strengthen management, taking into account the recommendations of the current OIOS report. The detailed plan of action informed by the OIOS recommendations will be reflected in this forthcoming report.*

(*Signed*) Dileep **Nair**
Under-Secretary-General
for Internal Oversight Services